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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) An extendable and contractable steering column apparatus for a vehicle including an outer column through which an inner column is slidably inserted, a lock housing portion formed on the outer column, and a locking mechanism that includes a pair of movable pieces slidably fitted within a bore formed through the lock housing portion in a vehicle body widthwise direction, a screw rod passing through said pair of movable pieces, and an operation lever disposed at an end portion of the screw rod, wherein said pair of movable pieces is shifted toward each other so as to press said inner column and away from each other so as to release the pressure on said inner column, in response to swinging of said operating lever, and wherein a cross section of the bore of the lock housing portion is non-circular and cross sections of said pair of movable pieces are also non-circular correspondingly.

2. (Previously Presented) An extendable and contractable steering column apparatus according to claim

1, wherein said lock housing is integrally molded with said outer column.

3. (Previously Presented) An extendable and contractable steering column apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said outer column is formed of die cast molded aluminum.

4. (New) An extendable and contractable steering column apparatus for a vehicle including an outer column through which an inner column is slidably inserted, a lock housing portion formed on the outer column, and a locking mechanism that includes a pair of movable pieces slidably fitted within a bore formed through the lock housing portion in a vehicle body widthwise direction, a screw rod passing through said pair of movable pieces, and an operation lever disposed at an end portion of the screw rod,

wherein said pair of movable pieces is shifted toward each other so as to press said inner column and away from each other so as to release the pressure on said inner column, in response to swinging of said operating lever,

wherein a cross section of the bore of the lock housing is polygonal and cross sections of said pair of movable pieces are also polygonal correspondingly; and

respective peripheral surfaces forming the polygonal cross section of each of said bore and said movable pieces, include at least a surface which is parallel to an axis of the screw rod.

5. (New) An extendable and contractable steering column apparatus according to claim 4,

wherein the respective peripheral surfaces forming the polygonal cross section of each of said bore and said movable pieces, are all flat and parallel to an axis of the screw rod.